

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A walk-behind outdoor power equipment unit, comprising:
 - a housing operable for movement over a ground surface;
 - a handle assembly comprising a first handle member and a second handle member each pivotally coupled to the housing, wherein the handle assembly may be selectively locked, relative to the housing, in a first operating position; and
 - a handle assembly release apparatus associated with the handle assembly, wherein the handle assembly release apparatus comprises a release member operable to impart a releasing force simultaneously to each of the first and second handle members to unlock the handle assembly from the first operating position, the releasing force at least partially reacted by the housing.
2. The unit of claim 1, wherein the release member comprises a lever operable to pivot about an axis transverse to a longitudinal axis of the unit.
3. The unit of claim 1, wherein the housing further comprises a first handle retention portion operable to pivotally receive the first handle member, and a second handle retention portion operable to pivotally receive the second handle member.
4. The unit of claim 3, wherein the release member comprises contact portions operable to simultaneously slide between both the first handle retention portion and the first handle member, and between the second handle retention portion and the second handle member.
5. The unit of claim 3, wherein the first handle retention portion comprises a lip against which the first handle member is biased, the lip comprising a first recess at a location corresponding to the first operating position of the handle assembly.

6. The unit of claim 5, wherein the lip comprises a second recess at a location corresponding to a second storage position of the handle assembly.
7. The unit of claim 3, wherein the releasing force comprises a force that displaces the first handle member relative to the first handle retention portion, and the second handle member relative to the second handle retention portion.
8. The unit of claim 1, wherein the releasing force comprises a force that displaces the first handle member and the second handle member transverse to a longitudinal axis of the unit.
9. The unit of claim 1, wherein the handle assembly is movable to a second storage position.
10. A walk-behind lawn mower, comprising:
 - a housing operable for movement over a ground surface;
 - a handle assembly comprising at least one handle member, the handle assembly pivotally coupled to the housing and operable to be selectively locked, relative to the housing, in a first operating position; and
 - a handle assembly release apparatus associated with the handle assembly, wherein the handle assembly release apparatus comprises a lever pivotable about an axis transverse to a longitudinal axis of the mower and operable to impart a releasing force to the at least one handle member to unlock the same from the first operating position.
11. The mower of claim 10, wherein the releasing force is at least partially reacted by the housing.
12. The mower of claim 10, wherein the housing further comprises a handle retention portion operable to pivotally receive the handle assembly.

13. The mower of claim 12, wherein the lever comprises a contact portion operable to slide between the handle retention portion and the at least one handle member.

14. The mower of claim 10, wherein the releasing force comprises a force that displaces the at least one handle member in a direction transverse to a longitudinal axis of the mower.

15. A walk-behind lawn mower comprising:

- a housing operable for movement over a ground surface, the housing comprising a first and a second handle retention portion;

- a handle assembly comprising a first and a second handle member pivotally coupled to the first and second handle retention portions, respectively, the handle assembly operable to be selectively locked, relative to the housing, in a first operating position; and

- a handle assembly release apparatus associated with the housing and operable to unlock the handle assembly from the first operating position, wherein the handle assembly release apparatus comprises a lever member operable to simultaneously apply a separating force between the first handle member and the first handle retention portion, and between the second handle member and the second handle retention portion.

16. The mower of claim 15, wherein the first and second handle retention portions define a generally transverse pivot axis about which the handle assembly pivots.

17. The mower of claim 15, wherein the lever member pivots about a generally horizontal and transverse axis.

18. The mower of claim 15, wherein the lever member is operable to simultaneously wedge between the first handle member and the first handle retention portion, and between the second handle member and the second handle retention portion.

19. The mower of claim 15, wherein the first handle retention portion comprises a lip against which the first handle member is biased, the lip having a first recess at a location corresponding to the first operating position of the handle assembly.

20. The mower of claim 15, wherein the first handle retention portion is positioned immediately adjacent to the first handle member.

21. The mower of claim 20, wherein the first handle member is biased towards the first handle retention portion.

22. A walk-behind lawn mower comprising:
a housing operable for movement over a ground surface;
a handle assembly comprising a handle member, the handle member pivotally coupled to a handle retention portion of the housing and operable to be locked in at least a first operating position relative to the housing; and
a handle assembly release apparatus associated with the housing, wherein the handle assembly release apparatus comprises a release member pivotable about an axis transverse to a longitudinal axis of the mower, the release member operable to selectively slide between the handle member and the handle retention portion.